



Florida yew



Plant Botanical Name:

Taxus floridana

Florida yew is one of the rarest trees in the world and occurs only in forested bluffs and ravines scattered along a 15-mile section on one side of the Apalachicola River in Florida's Gadsden and Liberty counties. Many of the plants are found on privately owned land, and are vulnerable to destruction because endangered species laws do not protect endangered plants on private property. Like Pacific yew (*T. brevifolia*), the bark of Florida yew contains the promising cancer-fighting compound taxol. Scientists at Florida State University in Tallahassee were the first to synthesize taxol and the same year, scientists from Montana State University discovered that taxol is produced by a fungus that grows in association with yew trees. Taxol has been proven useful in treating breast cancer, ovarian cancer, some kinds of leukemia and certain kidney diseases. The still-undiscovered pharmaceutical uses of plants are an important reason for plant conservation efforts.

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